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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
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INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
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AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 000002

DEPT FOR DSCC, DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, DS/OPO/FPD, AF/EX

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#)

SUBJECT: PRO-PALESTINE DEMONSTRATION AT US CONSULATE JOHANNESBURG

¶1. (U) Summary - On January 2, 2009, the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) of South Africa mobilized approximately 1000 demonstrators outside the U.S. Consulate in Johannesburg. The purpose of the rally was to protest against Israeli military operations currently underway in Gaza and U.S. support for Israel. The crowd was generally aggressive and confrontational. Nevertheless, the event concluded without incident; no arrests were made and one injury was reported. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On January 2, 2009, from 1400 to 1630, the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) of South Africa mobilized approximately 1000 demonstrators outside the U.S. Consulate in Johannesburg. The purpose of the rally was to protest against Israeli military operations currently underway in Gaza and U.S. support for Israel. As required by law, the PSC applied for and was granted a permit to protest by the City of Johannesburg. Although the permit estimated 50 participants, the actual number at the peak of the demonstration was approximately 1000 as estimated by RSO staff.

¶3. (U) Local police and LGF personnel provided perimeter security but were significantly outnumbered and threatened by protestors. Despite numerous attempts to force the crowd into a pre-designated area across the street, the crowd soon pushed their way into the street and up to the vehicle bollards. While generally avoiding physical confrontation, the demonstrators were aggressive and confrontational, chanting anti-American/anti-Israeli/pro-Palestinian slogans and carrying banners of a similar nature. In addition to the many Palestinian flags and banners with such slogans as "Free Palestine," "No Justice, No Peace" and "This Is a Holocaust" were more extreme messages, for example, a banner reading "One Bullet, One Zionist, Obama X, Osama [check]" with one demonstrator actually wearing a rubber Osama bin Laden mask over his head. Police officials, surprised by the size of the crowd, called for additional units. Despite an RSO request to disperse the crowd based on failure to comply with conditions, police refused to do so citing the fear of further provocation. The permit granted clearly stipulated all entrances/exits would not be blocked. With the street filled with protestors, police shut down the road and allowed the demonstration to continue as scheduled. Several crowd members held up shoes in a sign of protest and a number of shoes and plastic water bottles were hurled over the perimeter wall. Several local and international journalists were on hand to record the activity. At approximately 1630, event organizers concluded the rally and dispersed the crowd. No arrests were made. A photographer for the Financial Mail claimed a demonstrator tried to punch him and hit his camera.

¶4. (U) Post disseminated both a security bulletin and warden message on December 31, 2008, reminding people to avoid such gatherings. Consulate employees remained inside the building until the conclusion of the event. RSO will convene an after-action meeting with local police in an effort to improve upon existing crowd control measures.

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